

President Michelle Bachelet began her second term in March 2014 with an aggressive reform agenda aimed at the constitution, education, and taxation. In September, Congress passed the administration's tax reform bill, which aims to increase state revenue by increasing corporate taxes and abolishing a number of existing corporate tax exemptions. The increase is expected to help with social reforms, including a major overhaul of the education system.

Bachelet attempted to ease tensions with Chile's Mapuche indigenous people in 2014. She appointed Francisco Huenchumilla, a politician of Mapuche descent, to the governorship of the Araucania region, home to the country's largest Mapuche community. Following his appointment, Huenchumilla issued an apology for the state's seizure of Mapuche lands in the 19th century, outlining a policy agenda to solve the land dispute and combat poverty and socioeconomic inequality in Araucania.

A spate of small bombings, allegedly by antisystem anarchists, gripped Santiago throughout the year. While small-scale bomb attacks are common in Santiago, injuries and casualties are rare. In September, however, an explosion at one of the capital's metro stations injured 14 people. The Bachelet administration promised to improve government responses to such incidents and opened discussion of reforms to counterterrorism legislation and the reach of Chile's intelligence agency.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 39 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 12 / 12

The president of Chile is elected for a four-year term, and consecutive terms are not permitted. The Senate's 38 members serve eight-year terms, with half up for election every four years, and the 120-member Chamber of Deputies is elected for four years.

General elections held in November 2013 were considered free and fair. The ruling center-left New Majority coalition—formerly known as Concertación—won 67 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 12 in the Senate, for a simple majority in both houses. Parties affiliated with the conservative Alliance coalition won 49 seats in the lower house and 7 in the Senate. Bachelet, who previously served as president from 2006 to 2010, was elected president in a runoff election in December 2013.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 15 / 16

Chile has a multiparty political system with two dominant coalitions. The center-left New Majority coalition is composed of the Christian Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, the Party for Democracy, and the Communist Party. The center-right Alliance coalition consists of the Independent Democratic Union and the National Renewal party. Most parties identify themselves on the basis of political, economic, and social ideology.

In 2005, the Senate passed reforms that repealed some of the last vestiges of military rule, ending authoritarian curbs on the legislative branch and restoring the president's right to remove top military

commanders.

No party specifically addresses issues of concern to Chile's indigenous groups. In 2014, Bachelet announced intentions to expand the representation of Chile's indigenous groups in national governance, though no specific steps had been made by year's end.

C. Functioning of Government: 12 / 12

Levels of official corruption are low by regional standards. In addition to robust transparency and campaign-finance laws passed in 2003, a 2007 law offered protections for public employees who expose corruption. A freedom of information law was enacted in 2008, and the government generally grants public access to all unclassified information.

In September 2014, the national press began reporting about alleged corruption involving members of the Independent Democratic Union, prominent political figures—including a former finance minister and tax authorities—and contributions to political campaigns made by the holding company Penta Group. An investigation, focusing on allegations of both tax fraud and illegal campaign financing by the Penta Group, was ongoing at year's end. Chile was ranked 21 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Civil Liberties: 56 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 16 / 16

Guarantees of free speech are generally respected, though some laws barring defamation of state institutions remain on the books. Unlike in neighboring Argentina and Uruguay, Chile has never repealed the media regulation framework established under its military regime. The Spanish media group PRISA owns 60 percent of radio stations, and two private Chilean companies, El Mercurio and Copesa, own approximately 95 percent of newspaper titles. This duopoly in the print sector hinders the ability of independent media to compete. There are no government restrictions on the internet.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally upholds this right in practice.

The government does not restrict academic freedom. In 2014, President Bachelet proposed an education reform package that aims to increase funding for preschools, reduce copayments for education, and obligate schools to be nonprofit institutions if they receive government funding. Some elements of the proposal had not been submitted to Congress by year's end, while others remained embroiled in heated debate in the Senate.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 11 / 12

The rights to form nongovernmental organizations and to assemble peacefully are largely respected. In May 2014, thousands of Chileans protested to urge the government to deliver promised educational reforms and include citizens in the reform dialogue; the protests proceeded largely peacefully. In August,

participants of a major protest action called the National March for Education, initiated by student and teacher groups in multiple cities, echoed these concerns, critiquing the slow pace of reform while demanding greater public inclusion in the process. Police clashed with small groups of demonstrators in Santiago, leading to some arrests. The protest action was otherwise unimpeded.

Despite laws protecting worker and union rights, antiunion practices by private employers are reportedly common.

F. Rule of Law: 14 / 16

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the courts are generally free from political interference. The right to legal counsel is constitutionally guaranteed, but indigent defendants have not always received effective representation.

The government has developed effective mechanisms to investigate and punish police abuse and corruption. However, excessive force and human rights abuses committed by the Carabineros—a national police element of the armed forces—still occur. Chile's prisons are overcrowded, and inmates suffer from physical abuse and poor sanitation.

In September 2014, Bachelet announced a pledge to overturn the controversial amnesty law that protects military officers who committed human rights violations in the first five years of the regime of Augusto Pinochet, who ruled from 1973 to 1990. Critics of the law have deemed it inconsistent with Chile's commitment to respecting human rights. The announcement was largely symbolic, as many courts have circumvented the ruling in recent years, allowing for the sentencing of more than 250 individuals. In May, 75 agents of Pinochet's secret police force were convicted for the aggravated kidnapping of a political opponent.

Approximately one million Chileans identify themselves with indigenous ethnic groups. While indigenous people still experience societal discrimination, their poverty levels are declining, aided by government scholarships, land transfers, and social spending. The slow and delayed repatriation of the ancestral land of the Mapuche indigenous group has been a cause of years of violent protest, including arson attacks on disputed lands, aggravated in recent years by the application of Chile's controversial antiterrorism law to cases of Mapuche resistance. The legislation, as modified from the Pinochet regime, allows for anonymous witness testimony, extended detention of suspects without charge, and lengthy sentences. In July 2014, the Inter-American Court on Human Rights annulled the conviction of eight indigenous activists who had been tried under the antiterrorism law in 2003; the Bachelet administration agreed to adhere to the decision.

LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people continue to face societal bias, despite a 2012 antidiscrimination law that covers sexual orientation and gender identity. Chilean law does not permit transgender people to change gender indicators on identity documents, a restriction that in 2013 led the country's first transgender congressional candidate to end her campaign. In the 2013 legislative elections, an openly gay man was elected to Congress for the first time. Bachelet has voiced support for efforts to strengthen laws against hate crimes and discrimination.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 15 / 16

The constitution protects the freedom of movement, and the government respects this right in practice.

In March 2014, the government issued a historic apology to the Mapuche for the seizure of their lands, and vowed to continue to buy more land for the Mapuche, while investing in antipoverty measures. One factor driving the protracted land conflict is the fact that the body in charge of buying back the disputed land, the National Corporation for Indigenous Development, lacks any expropriation powers. Accordingly, it has been locked in prolonged negotiations with landowners.

In 2014, President Bachelet appointed women to nine of 23 positions in the cabinet, as opposed to having in her first term a cabinet that was 50 percent female. In March, she proposed the creation of a new ministry to support the institutional advancement of women's issues and gender equality; the proposal remained under discussion at year's end.

Violence against women and children remains a problem. Bachelet submitted a proposal in May to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape, incest, or endangerment of the mother's life; the bill was being debated in Congress at year's end. Chile is one of only five countries in the world that allows imprisonment for the crime of abortion.

In August 2014, a Senate committee voted unanimously to advance a bill allowing same-sex legal unions.

Chile is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking for sexual or commercial exploitation. While all forms of compulsory labor are illegal, forced labor, particularly among foreign citizens, continues to occur in the agriculture, mining, and domestic service sectors. In 2014, law enforcement agencies continued efforts to combat trafficking, following measures in 2013 that increased the capacity of prosecutors and investigators to respond to the issue.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)